

Maine Community College System

Strategic Plan

JULY 1, 2002 TO JUNE 30, 2007

Maine's Community Colleges are dedicated to educating today's students for tomorrow's career opportunities in an environment that supports personal and professional growth, innovation, and lifelong learning. The colleges are committed to enhancing the quality of life and economic prosperity of Maine through excellence in education.

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Why Develop a Systemwide Strategic Plan?

Each of the seven community colleges has a different educational environment, different programs designed to meet the needs of students, employers and community interests of their individual regions, and different operating priorities based on their institutional needs.

What, then, binds these regional institutions together?

It is through a common mission – established by the Maine Legislature and augmented by the Board of Trustees – that each college has a role in creating an educated, skilled and adaptable labor force for the state of Maine and supporting the continuing education and transfer aspirations of students. And further, that these individual institutions will collectively respond to the changing workforce needs of the state's employers to promote local, regional and statewide economic development (Public Law, Chapter 431).

This diverse scope – from neighborhood to statewide, from single employer to broad industry sector, from individual student to entire citizenry – is one of the

BACKGROUND

distinguishing hallmarks of the Maine Community College System. Yet this expansive role presents many challenges, including how such an organization agrees on its direction, sets priorities and makes adjustments in either if necessary.

This Strategic Plan defines who we are by making our goals clear and by defining how we intend to reach them through specific objectives and measures of performance. By establishing these goals, objectives and measures, the Strategic Plan ensures that all of our toughest decisions will be weighed against our stated priorities, so that any significant change of course must be proven necessary and appropriate when measured against those priorities.

How was the Strategic Plan Developed?

Structurally, the Strategic Plan follows a four-part design that visits the mission of the Community College System, takes stock of internal and external environments, and concludes with a series of goals, objectives and measures based on those findings.

The foundation of the Strategic Plan is the System's mission, vision and the Statement of Core Services and Attributes of a Comprehensive Two-year College System, which was developed and endorsed by the MCCC community and Board of Trustees in 2001.

I – Mission, Vision and Statement of Core Services and Attributes of a Comprehensive Two-year College System

The mission of the MCCC was established by the Legislature in 1986 when the System was recognized as an autonomous postsecondary system. The vision was

developed by a Systemwide cross-functional committee in the mid-1990s and endorsed by the colleges and the Board of Trustees.

In 1998, the Board of Trustees approved an important addition to the MCCS mission that included supporting the transfer goals of Maine citizens. This change was a necessary step required by the regional accrediting body, the New England Association of Schools & Colleges, after the decision by the colleges, endorsed by the Board of Trustees, to offer the associate in arts degree in liberal studies. The associate in arts is the traditional transfer degree for students who start their higher education in two-year colleges then move either into associate degree career programs or transfer on to baccalaureate degree granting colleges and universities.

Having decided to offer the associate in arts degree and include transfer students in their mission, the colleges held further discussions to articulate the implications of offering the associate in arts credential at their institutions. After campus-wide discussions, the colleges endorsed a *Statement of Core Services and Attributes: A Comprehensive Two-Year College System*, which was adopted by the Board of Trustees in 2001 “...to further advance the vision and future direction of Maine’s Community Colleges.”

II – The MCCS: A fifty-five year history

When the MCCS developed its previous strategic plan in 1997, the system was still evolving as an independent organization and was building the capabilities to fulfill its mission during increasing demand for graduates, a dramatically-changing economy and work environment, and challenging financial times in Maine.

What is MCCS today?

By looking at the System’s growth – from post-World War II vocational institutes to a higher education system with major impact on the state’s economic and social development – we can understand some of the forces that have shaped

these institutions. Only by revisiting the past can we learn from it, and build on our strengths and successes for an even stronger future.

III – Environmental Scan

As a publicly-funded entity with a public mission, the System operates within a broader context that has direct bearing on how we do our work. The Environmental Scan is a means of identifying the major environmental forces likely to affect Maine – and the community colleges – over the next five years and beyond. These forces were identified by the Presidents Council, and reviewed by college staff and the Board of Trustees.

IV – Goals, Objectives and Measures

The Strategic Plan is based on seven major goals. These goals are outcome-oriented statements of intent derived from both internal and external review. They are a System-wide declaration of the things which we agree are most important to successfully fulfilling our mission during the next five years. The central characteristic of this plan was inclusion of the broad MCCS community in its creation. There were three opportunities for community input to the plan as it was developed, the result of which is a stronger and better understood planning process and plan.

The seven goals originated at a meeting of the Presidents Council, where extensive discussion led to draft goals which were referred to the Strategic Plan Steering Committee. The Committee included representatives of each college and the System Office, all segments of the System's faculty and staff, the Presidents Council, and the Board of Trustees.

To provide a context for selection of the goals, the Committee distributed the draft goals, along with an early draft of the Environmental Scan, to students, faculty, staff, and college Advisory Committee members at each college and to the staff of the System Office for comment. The Committee met to consider the input

HOW WAS THE STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPED? *continued*

in their own review of the goals and to formulate comment to the Presidents for a redrafting of the goals. The Presidents reviewed the comments of the Committee and the input of the colleges and System Office staff before finalizing the goals to present them to the Board of Trustees for discussion. The Trustees held a work session to discuss the draft goals, and approved them.

In addition, a workshop for approximately 120 faculty and staff who participated in the MCCS Dirigo Institute in June 2001 provided an opportunity for small groups with facilitators to draft objectives and measures for two of the goals selected by each group. The work product of each group session was communicated to all participants after the Institute and was used by the Presidents Council as input to their drafting of the objectives and measures for the plan.

The process for review of and comment on the Presidents Council draft of the objectives and measures was the same as for the goals, culminating in the final approval of the goals, objectives and measures by the Board of Trustees in February 2002.

Where do we go from here?

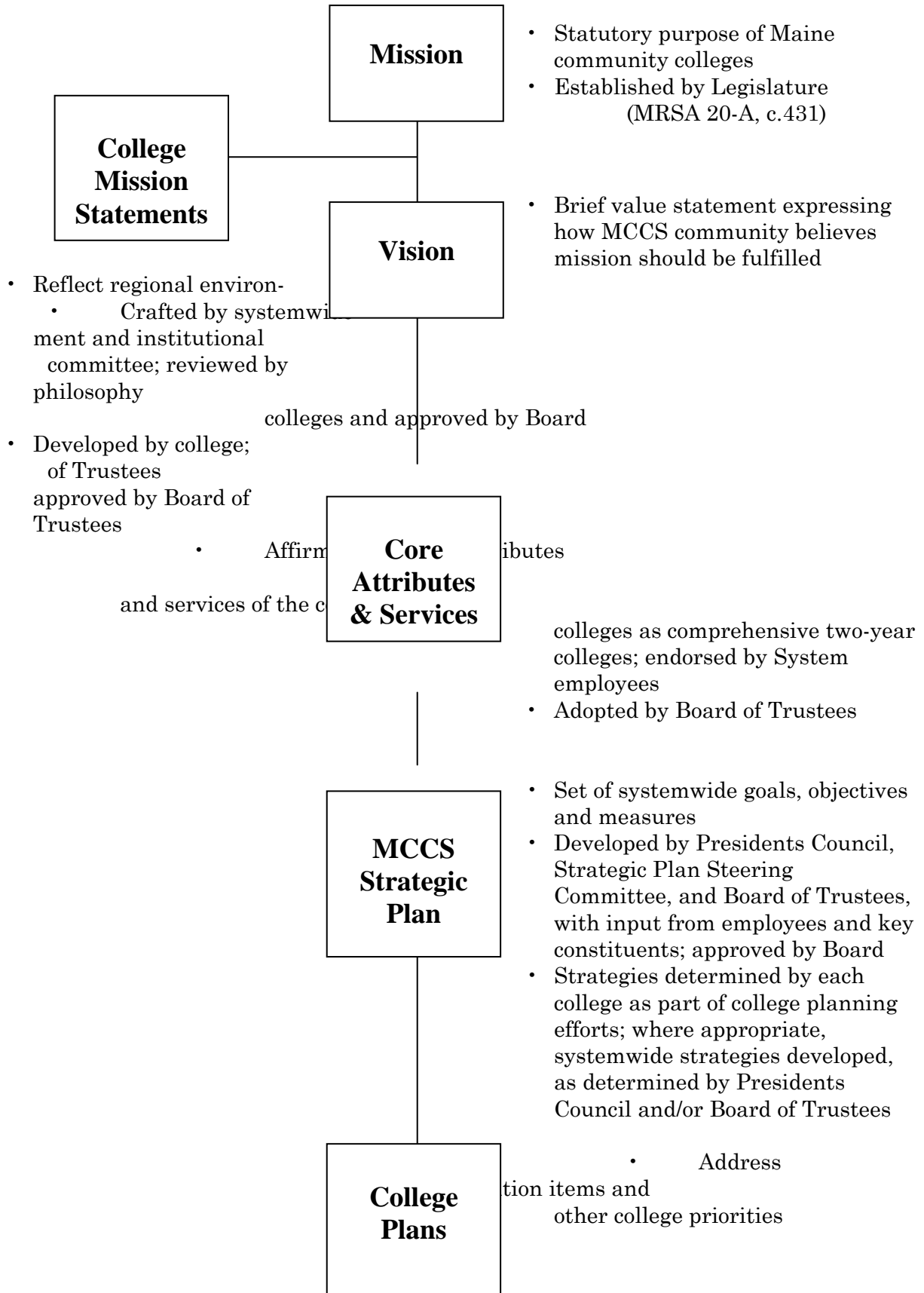
The plan represents a unified approach to guide System action at a strategic level. The colleges will use the framework of issues in the plan, along with those items they choose to add that are of unique importance to them, to build the operating details necessary to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in the plan by reaching the targets defined in the measures. In addition to individual college efforts, a number of objectives must be achieved through collaborative System-wide strategies, thus achieving collective results through the contribution of the individual strengths and experiences of the colleges.

Progress by the colleges on the goals and objectives stated in the plan will be reviewed at least annually by the Presidents Council and Board of Trustees. And, there will be an opportunity to revisit the goals, objectives and measures to

HOW WAS THE STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPED? *continued*

assure that they remain relevant to the environment in which the colleges operate.

From Mission to Action



- Incorporate MCCS Strategic Plan objectives and measures, and items specific for individual college

MCCS: A 55-Year History

First VTI established

THE HISTORY OF MAINE'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES BEGAN only five and a half decades ago, with the creation of the Maine Vocational Technical Institute (MVTI) in Augusta. Under the federal Serviceman's Readjustment Act, popularly referred to as the "G.I. Bill," the Maine Legislature established the MVTI in 1946 to help veterans returning from World War II prepare for reentry into the workforce. In its first year, the school enrolled 80 veterans in four programs: Automotive, Electrical, Machine Tool and Radio. Affirming the need in Maine for access to postsecondary vocational education programs, enrollment at the MVTI grew steadily in subsequent years. In 1952, the institute was moved to Fort Preble in South Portland, where Southern Maine Community College remains today.

The creation of the first Maine VTI was reflective of a far-reaching national movement in public education. As employment opportunities for technicians in defense and civilian occupations were increasing in the post-World War II era, so was demand for access to postsecondary programs geared toward trade and technical jobs. Concurrently, during the

post-Depression years, demand from high-school graduates for further education was leading to the proliferation of open-access community colleges around the nation. The pressure to create more – and alternative – options for postsecondary education permanently changed the face of public higher education, opening its doors to citizens of all ages and backgrounds, and broadening its scope beyond the liberal arts to include occupational and technical preparation.

From single institute to statewide service

In Maine, the expansion of postsecondary vocational education opportunities was fueled in part by a master plan issued by the state Department of Education in 1962, which called for three new VTIs and proposed the development of Maine's secondary vocational education regions and centers.

During that decade, a total of five new institutes were established: Northeastern Maine Vocational Institute in Presque Isle (1961), Androscoggin State Vocational Institute in Lewiston (1963), Eastern Maine VTI in Bangor (1965), Washington County VTI in Calais (1968), and Kennebec Valley VTI in Waterville (1969).

From the beginning, VTI programs were based on the philosophy that guides community college programming today: to prepare people for immediate employment as well as for future growth and career change. The balance of objectives was reflected in the curricula, which included a combination of technical and general education courses.

As the VTIs established a history of success and growth, the institutions came into their own as a viable, respected part of Maine's public higher education system. With steadily increasing enrollment and high graduate placement, the institutes were clearly filling an important role, preparing Maine citizens for technical careers, and providing employers with a much-needed pool of skilled workers. At the same time, the institutes' role had

broadened: they had become integral, valued parts of their communities – open, accessible centers of learning; key partners in local development efforts; and valued training providers for area employers. The growing public support that the VTIs enjoyed among policy makers and, especially, among their local constituencies, has become a hallmark of the institutes that continues today.

1980s: A decade of landmarks

Along with growing public support, the 1980s brought several major landmarks for the VTIs.

The first, in 1986, was the separation of the VTIs from State government and the establishment of the Maine Vocational Technical Institute System as an autonomous system, similar in structure to the University of Maine System. Fueling the change was the belief by members of the Legislature that the only way the VTIs could be allowed to flourish and achieve their full potential in meeting the growing needs of the state was with higher visibility at the State level and an administrative structure independent from the State, allowing for greater flexibility to respond to rapid shifts in the labor market, and business needs. A Board of Trustees was established by the Legislature as the System's sole policy-setting authority, and a System Office was created to serve as staff to the Board, and to provide coordination, technical support and state-level leadership to the colleges.

The second landmark was in 1989 when the names of the VTIs were changed to Technical Colleges. This change was intended to clarify the distinction between the secondary and postsecondary vocational education systems, and to more accurately reflect their role as institutions of higher education.

The third landmark was a \$20,210,600 bond issue passed by Maine voters in 1989 for capital improvements at the six technical colleges. This bond

issue provided a significant injection of funds to develop state-of-the-art facilities, as well as master campus plans for each of the six colleges.

For the System Office and newly-established Board of Trustees, a major focus of the late 1980s and early 1990s was the process of assuming the administrative and oversight functions previously provided by the State, including financial and accounting systems, personnel services, collective bargaining, program coordination, administration of Carl Perkins funds, representation before the Legislature and other functions. This process was accentuated by increasing governmental regulations at both the state and federal levels.

1990s—A decade of growth and change

The gradual transition from an industrial-based economy to a technology-based economy, from the Taylor-style shop floor to the team-oriented production operation, brought – and continues to bring – enormous challenges to the technical colleges as well as tremendous growth in enrollment and diversity of offerings.

The evolution of the workplace has wide-ranging implications for the technical colleges, including: assuring that faculty and other employees' skills and credentials are keeping pace with changing occupational requirements; maintaining up-to-date instructional equipment; expanding programming to meet the needs of changing and emerging industries; providing more flexible scheduling and support services for the increasing adult student population; responding to heightened demand from employers for customized employee training; increasing access through online courses and off-campus centers; and supporting the growing need for lifelong learning by facilitating the transition from high school to technical college, and from technical college to four-year colleges and universities.

Another result of the changing economy and workplace has been a growing need by employers for employees with a strong academic foundation – to build upon as work processes and technologies evolve – as well as strong complementary skills, such as communication, teamwork and problem solving. For the technical colleges, this has resulted in a strengthening and diversification of academic course offerings, and incorporating the “soft” skills into curricula, as well as utilizing technology in virtually all aspects of the learning process.

Despite – and in part because of – the economic challenges of the state and heightened competition for high-skill jobs, legislators seeking ways to fuel Maine's economic growth supported an important technical college initiative in the mid-1990s geared to helping Maine people make the transition to the high-skill jobs of the new economy. The Maine Quality Centers have enabled the colleges to offer direct assistance to State and local economic development efforts, through customized training for new and expanding businesses.

In addition, following years of legislative debate over the shortage of technical education opportunities in the southern-most region of the state, the Legislature established the seventh technical college – York County Technical College – in 1994. The new college opened its doors to students in the Fall of 1995. By 2001, the college was serving over 800 credit students, and had become a critical partner to the region's businesses.

During this decade, the escalating demand for highly skilled, technologically proficient workers, led to three separate legislative commissions which assessed the enrollment capacity of the technical colleges to meet Maine's needs. All three groups endorsed the goal of expanding the technical colleges' enrollment to at least 10,000 degree students per year. In 1999, the Legislature endorsed a long-term plan to begin expanding access to the colleges, making a down-payment on an incremental growth plan. Additionally, the Legislature and Maine people endorsed a major capital

improvements bond issue for the technical colleges, providing \$26.4 million to invest in high-tech facilities and improvements.

Increasing demand for people with higher levels of education also resulted in a significant push in the 1990s to increase transfer opportunities for students. By the end of the decade, transfer arrangements with four-year colleges and universities were in place for most associate degree programs.

In addition, the growing concern about Maine's low college participation and attainment levels, and the growing need for a low-cost two-year college option, led the technical colleges in 1999 to begin offering the associate in arts degree, a core offering of comprehensive two-year colleges. While general education courses have always been a part of the technical college curriculum, this degree represents the first-ever full liberal studies credential offered by the colleges. Until 1999, Maine was one of a few states in the nation, and the only New England state, to not offer the associate in arts option at a low-cost two-year college.

By the end of the decade, growth in occupational programs and high demand for the new Associate in Arts resulted in an enrollment growth of 78 percent between 1989 and 2001.

Increased financial pressures

While the 1990s were marked by unprecedented demand and an environment in constant flux, the financial pressures of the State have only accentuated the challenge. One by-product of the public funding environment has been increased governmental scrutiny and demand for accountability – not only from the technical colleges but from all recipients of public funds. While the Technical College System has been lauded as a lean organization and a worthwhile investment for public funds, long-term funding issues continue to squeeze all areas of the System.

Adding to these pressures are dramatic increases in costs associated with health insurance, retirement, utilities and other areas – and the necessity of developing comprehensive and efficient information and administrative systems, and other investments in technology and Internet access.

Maine's technical colleges today

Today, the seven technical colleges offer a diverse mix of programs and services designed to meet Maine's work force needs, both regionally and statewide, and prepare individuals for continued education at four-year colleges. In all, over 6,400 degree-seeking students and another 10,000 credit and non-credit students are served by the colleges each year. Together, offerings include:

- Over 230 one- and two-year programs in health care, computers, environmental sciences, automotive technology, construction, early childhood education, electrical & electronics, graphic arts/printing, hospitality, pulp & paper, business and financial services, biotechnology, metals manufacturing, liberal studies, marine occupations and many others.
- An Associate in Arts degree launched in 1999, now enrolling over 1,000 students statewide.
- Extensive continuing education offerings, including credit and non-credit courses, workshops, seminars and customized training programs for technical, professional, and managerial-level employees – offered either on campus or at work sites during the day, evenings and weekends.
- Fast-track education and training for new and expanding companies through the Maine Quality Centers, offered free of charge to qualifying businesses and trainees.

- Programs designed to enhance applied learning opportunities and improve the transition from high school to college and the workplace: Tech Prep and Maine Career Advantage.
- Dozens of articulation agreements with high schools and four-year colleges and universities, to support lifelong learning and facilitate the transition from high school to two-year college and four-year college.
- Over 75 online courses now available across the seven-college system.
- A network of ten off-campus centers, with an eleventh coming on line next year.

In addition, the colleges have become vital community centers, where regional activities, educational workshops, cultural events and economic development efforts take place.

A New Era

In 2002, Maine is in the midst of a growing dialogue among policy makers and others about Maine's low college participation and attainment levels. Central to those discussions is a growing consensus that Maine's lack of a comprehensive community college system – which in most other states provides low-cost access to higher education – is a major factor in Maine's low college-going rates.

The broadening role of the MTCS is certain to be central to policy makers discussions. For the technical colleges, the issue is timely. With the addition in 1999 of the associate in arts degree, Maine's technical colleges now offer all the credentials typically offered by community colleges. In 2001, the MTCS community underwent in-depth discussions to affirm the core services and attributes of the colleges as comprehensive two-year colleges. The result of these internal discussions was the endorsement of the *Statement of Core Services and Attributes of Maine's Community Colleges: A Comprehensive Two-*

year College System. Additionally, all seven colleges are in the midst of transitioning to the accrediting body used by most higher education institutions: the New England Association of Schools & Colleges Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.

While the MTCS has prepared for and embraced the comprehensive two-year college mission, for the technical colleges to truly deliver community college services at the level Maine needs, this expanded mission must be recognized and embraced by the state, and a serious investment must be made if Maine people and businesses are to truly reap the benefits of it.

Historical Landmarks

- 1946 Legislature established Maine Vocational Technical Institute, as part of state Department of Education. MVTI governed by Legislature and state Board of Education. (Moved to Fort Preble in South Portland in 1952).
- 1961 Legislature established Northeastern Maine Vocational Institute (now NMCC) in Presque Isle (opened in 1963).
- 1962 Master plan for vocational education issued by state Department of Education recommending expansion of two existing VTIs and addition of two new VTIs.
- 1963 Referendum passed by Maine voters, establishing Androscoggin State Vocational Institute (now CMCC) in Lewiston (moved to Auburn in 1966).
- 1964 Legislature established Eastern Maine VTI in Bangor (opened in 1966). Existing institutes renamed to SMVTI, CMVTI, NMVTI (EMVTI name unchanged).
- 1968 Bond issue passed by Maine voters establishing Washington County VTI (opened in 1969).
- 1969 Legislature established Kennebec Valley VTI in Waterville (moved to Fairfield site in 1983).
- 1981 \$7 million Bond Issue for buildings and repairs passed by Maine voters.
- 1984 \$12,900,000 Bond Issue for Capital Improvements and Renovations at six VTIs passed by Maine voters.
- 1985 \$2,200,000 Bond Issue for Equipment and Trade Purchases at six VTIs passed by Maine voters.

HISTORICAL LANDMARKS *continued*

- 1986 Legislature separated VTIs from state Department of Education; established MVTIS as independent system; Board of Trustees established as sole policy-making authority.
- 1988 System Office began assuming System-wide functions previously provided by state.
- 1989 Legislature renamed Maine Vocational Technical Institute System to Maine Technical College System to reflect role as postsecondary education system. Each VTI renamed Technical College. \$20 million Bond Issue for capital improvements approved by Maine voters.
- 1994 Legislature established York County Technical College (opened in 1995). \$5 million Bond Issue for capital equipment approved by Maine voters.
- 1998 Created the Community College Partnership of Maine with the University of Maine System. Board of Trustees adopted addition of the Associate in Arts transfer program.
- 1999 \$26.4 million Bond Issue for Capital Improvements at seven Technical Colleges passed by Maine voters. Technical Colleges add Associate in Arts credential in Fall 1999.
- 2001 Employees and Board of Trustees endorse Statement of Core Services and Attributes of Maine's Community Colleges – A Comprehensive Two-year College System.

Economic Landscape

The U.S. economy enjoyed historically strong performance in mid- and late-1990s. In 1998 through 2000, gross domestic product grew at rates above four percent annually with modest inflation. Many economists considered gains in worker productivity as an essential ingredient in the economy's turnaround. As growth began to cool in the second half of 2000, continued productivity gains were seen as a factor in staving off a recession.

Maine's economy has largely dovetailed with national trends. The state had one of its strongest economic performances in recent memory in 1999. Consumer retail sales grew 8.5 percent and employment grew three percent with the addition of 17,800 jobs. Maine's growth rates did not keep pace with the nation largely because its population grew more slowly.

In mid-2000, the state's economy slowed in line with the national economy, but employment did not suffer. All of Maine's 16 counties had lower unemployment rates in 2000 than in 1999. However, several continue to struggle with job losses in traditional industries. Washington County had a 7.8 percent unemployment rate in 2000, well above the state average of 3.3 and the national average as well.

In 2001, the Maine economy felt deeper repercussions from the national slow-down. The result was a tightening of the State budget and cuts or level funding for most public programs. At the end of the 2002 Legislative session, signs pointed to improvements in Maine's economic picture, but concerns continued about State needs outstripping budget resources.

Looking forward, state economists predict that Maine's economic prospects will be more immediately impacted by national trends. In the past, changes in the state's economic health had lagged national trends. Today, national and international markets are more integrated and both consumer and business decisions cascade rapidly to local economies.

Education Opportunity in a Changing Economy

In contrast to short-term economic conditions, the long-term picture for Maine is clear. Our labor force is not getting any larger. In fact, Maine had the lowest birthrate in the nation in 1998. In-migration of workers is doing little to change the labor force picture. The state had a net gain of just 696 people between 1997 and 1998. Maine's most essential economic growth lever is in educating and training its current workers to higher levels.

In fact, the link between economic health and educational attainment may be more powerful today than at any time in Maine's history. One study indicates that raising the population's educational attainment by just one year raises gross domestic product by 1.2 percent. In Maine, that translates into a \$400 million annual gain for the state economy.

Maine has a clear need for trained and well-educated workers in economic segments already identified as critical for the state's growth. Precision manufacturing, health care and information technology are among seven distinct areas with growth potential, but each is facing labor shortages. At the national level, the Information Technology Association of America (ITAA) estimated a nationwide demand early in 2001 for 1.6 million workers in information

technology fields. More than 840,000 of those jobs were expected to go unfilled because the employers cannot find qualified applicants. The same situation exists in Maine. In March 2001, MESDA, Maine's IT industry association, reported that its members had 1,000 positions that had been open for three months. These are high-paying jobs, averaging \$47,800 in 1999 or roughly double the per capita income in Maine.

In addition, the state Department of Labor occupational outlook to 2008 shows a decline in jobs in traditional industries such as agriculture, forestry and fishing and a gain of more than 20,000 jobs in professional and technical fields. This continues the momentum toward an information and knowledge based economy.

Maine must improve the educational attainment of its citizens generally and close the skill gaps employers see in today's labor market. The state has achieved the distinction of having the highest high school graduation rate in the nation, at 94 percent. The strong performance of Maine kindergarten to grade 12 students on standardized tests also indicates that these graduates are at least as well prepared as peers nationally, possibly better.

And yet – despite this potential – Maine sends a smaller share of its high school graduates on to higher education. About 55 percent of Maine high school graduates go on to college, below the national average of 58 percent. Maine ranks poorly in the percent of its citizens age 25 or older with a bachelor's degree – falling far below our New England neighbors.

Two-year college programs can give Maine citizens an entry point to higher education that would go far in closing the educational attainment gap. Nationally, about 17 percent of students coming right from high school enroll in two-year colleges compared to just seven percent in Maine. And the importance of two-year colleges in terms of providing broad college access to adults – particularly those with low and moderate incomes – is significant. Forty-two percent of undergraduates in the U.S. are enrolled in two-year colleges, compared

with 15 percent in Maine. Clearly, the lack of a significant presence of two-year colleges in Maine is impacting higher education access and attainment. Two-year programs also offer the flexibility to close skill gaps hampering the growth potential of Maine businesses.

Signals that Maine will meet the economy's educational challenges are mixed. There is consensus among policy makers and business leaders that education and training are vital to economic prosperity. There also is evidence that more must be done. Earlier this year, the Maine Economic Growth Council cited the five measures related to higher education attainment and lifelong learning as "red flag" issues for the state's economic growth. In its "Measures of Growth" report, the Council found that the number of Maine citizens who reported participating in an educational seminar, program or course had remained flat compared with the prior year and declined slightly in comparison with the mid-1990s. With workers needing to stay updated in their fields and change careers more frequently, the Council rated lifelong learning as an essential growth lever that is not getting enough attention.

As 2001 began, the specter of an economic slowdown was influencing U.S. and Maine businesses. No one can predict the precise course of economic events, but it is important to note the impact on Maine's community colleges of both slowdowns and periods of job growth. Historically, enrollment at the community colleges has been counter-cyclical to the economy; therefore, as the economy contracts the community colleges' enrollment expands. The people most vulnerable in a softening economy are those hired when the labor market was experiencing high employment but who did not have a skill level that insured they could weather a tightening economy. They must increase their skills – or prepare for a new field – to reengage in good jobs as quickly as possible, often when they must also continue to work to support themselves and their families.

The Workplace

The Skills Gap

The message from workplaces has been consistent for some time: skills pay. And, because so many skill sets are new and more subject to change, there's a second message: employers can't find the skills they need.

Workplaces today are creating jobs that never existed before. Technical support consultant, web master and network administrator are all relatively new to our occupational lexicon. And, the requirements of existing jobs change constantly to meet competitive demands. The rapid change means that employers find fewer applicants who have the skills to fill a position. In 1998, the American Management Association reported that 19 percent of job applicants lacked the skills for the job they sought. By 1999, that figure doubled to 38 percent. This dramatic example reflects the ever-increasing expectations of workers.

U.S. businesses say this lack of qualified workers is a major hindrance to growth. In 1993, only about 25 percent of U.S. companies said lack of skilled workers was a barrier to growth. By 1998, the share of companies reporting the problem had grown to nearly 70 percent. An aging population promises to make this problem more challenging in the years ahead. In 1978, people older than 35 made up less than half the workforce. In 2028, 67 percent of workers will be older than 35.

New workplace demands are not simply related to jobs of the Internet economy. The change cuts across all occupations, driven by higher customer expectations, more rapid technological change and a more integrated and

competitive international economy. The National Alliance of Business reports that the reskilling of occupations is impacting auto mechanics, factory machine operators, assembly line workers, bank tellers and stockroom employees. Computer network- and Internet-based processes are re-making and increasing the complexity of traditional occupations, the NAB reported in fall 2000.

Employers also report the need for a workforce that is both skilled and capable of constant re-learning. AT&T captured the situation well in framing its Education Alliance. The company said the new world of the Internet, broadband and wireless technologies would require “a new breed of knowledge workers who need to be schooled in a unique blend of networking and information technologies, together with a broad-based liberal arts education.”

The difficulty national employers have in filling positions is felt powerfully in Maine as well. In recent surveys, the Maine Development Foundation found 68 percent of employers had difficulty finding skilled workers and the Maine State Chamber of Commerce reported that 77 percent of employers could not find the skilled workers they needed. In addition, one in five Maine companies have reported searching for workers outside the state or internationally. Looking forward, Maine will feel the same demographic pinch as national employers. Our workforce is older than the national average and we are not adding new workers through population growth or in-migration.

The education and training needs of Maine employers were documented by the Community College System several years ago in the Skills for the 21st Century report. Like their peers nationally, Maine employers need people with specialized skills who fill critical gaps, but who at the same time possess the so-called “soft skills” – abilities to communicate, analyze, make decisions, and adapt. To stay competitive, Maine employers have reorganized to include fewer management layers and more people who are self-managed. The combination of specialized and soft skills is essential to their success.

In addition, Maine companies report gaps in specific occupational categories. Machine tool operations in the state face significant challenges in finding qualified workers, a situation that has persisted for a number of years. In some instances, they have recruited internationally. Scotland, with strong educational and apprenticeship programs, has become a source for Maine machine tool firms. This meets the employer's immediate need, but bringing in new people from continents away is not a viable long-term solution. It also represents a missed opportunity for Maine people.

Investment in employee training is a critical need for Maine, yet employer sponsored training has declined in recent years. In 2001, only 10 percent of Maine workers who earned less than \$35,000 took part in employer-sponsored training. That's a significant drop from the peak of 35 percent in 1998. In addition to "lifelong learning," the Maine Economic Growth Council has ranked training investment as a "red flag" issue for the state's economic progress.

This new workplace environment necessitates major changes in the educational institutions that serve current and future workers. Education must become more responsive and more flexible. Institutions also will see partnerships with business become even more critical for meeting rapidly changing needs.

The community college system is experiencing these changes. The number and variety of programs offered is expanding. And, the models used to deliver those programs are increasingly flexible. The more seamless educational environment created by the colleges is a great benefit to current workers and students.

The community colleges have adapted well and continue to develop programs and flexible delivery methods to meet these demands. Going forward, our programs will operate in a new world of student expectations as well. How well we use emerging tools such as online learning to effectively diminish the barriers that concern students most will answer how well we serve future workplaces and employees.

Students and Prospective Students

Getting Ahead

The profile of community college students today reflects the economic and educational realities of our times. More are adult workers, acutely aware that higher education is their best prospect for higher earnings. Their incomes are generally low, with many balancing their community college program, work and family.

Students are directed by aspirations – to get ahead, to make a career transition, to make a start after high school. They cite two factors – cost of attending college and time – as the leading barriers to pursuing higher education. They value convenient schedules and online learning opportunities to manage the demands on their time. In addition, many have been out of school for some time so they need an institution with academic support services.

The adult learner is finding these traits in Maine's community colleges, with enrollment trends reflecting their interest. Fully 36 percent of first year

community college students are age 26 or older; 12 percent are 40 or older – a higher share than 10 years ago.

Larger numbers of students are attending a community college part time and maintaining a full-time work schedule. The share of students with prior college experience also has increased from 25 percent ten years ago to 36 percent, a signal that rapid occupational change is driving current workers into educational options that can connect them to the economy. Since 1989, System-wide enrollment of degree students has grown 78 percent.

Path to College

Prospective students come to the community colleges immediately after high school and also years after attending school. The system recently surveyed the second group, potential adult learners, to find out more about their interest in higher education. Maine has a larger number of citizens without college degrees per capita than most states – an unfortunate result of a lower than average college attainment rate.

The positive side of this picture is that prospective college students here know the value of education and many strongly desire achieving higher levels of education. Among the 455,000 Maine citizens, age 18 to 55 and without a college degree, 53 percent indicate at least some interest in getting their degree. The pool of people who describe themselves as *very interested* in achieving a degree is striking – 20 percent or 90,000 people.

Among those Maine adults expressing at least some interest in college, more than half – 56 percent – said they would like to pursue a program within one or two years. An equal number also know what career or degree they would pursue in their studies.

The barriers Maine people face in reaching those aspirations are reflected in the opinion survey. Financial factors play a leading role, with 30 percent saying that money has been one of the principal reasons why they have not

pursued a college degree. Nearly all, 92 percent, said *financial aid (scholarships and loans)* would make it easier for them to pursue a college degree, and 89 percent said *low cost of college* would make it easier.

These potential adult students also cite time as a major barrier – 54 percent listed *time needed to go to college* as a barrier to getting a college degree; 20 percent listed *child care*. Nearly half – 44 percent – said that *courses available over the Internet* would help them get their degree. Another 81 percent said a *convenient location* would help facilitate their going to college; 56 percent indicated that *ability to attend college part-time* would make obtaining a college degree easier; 56 percent also said that *evening or weekend courses* would help facilitate their going to college.

Traditional high school graduates also face the cost barrier as prospective community college students. Maine appears to have an opportunity to move more of these students directly to college, both by controlling cost and increasing financial assistance. Improving awareness of two-year college options also would likely move more high school graduates to continue their education. Right now, only about seven percent of recent high school graduates in Maine take advantage of a two-year college option compared with about 17 percent nationally.

Current community college students are highly sensitive to cost. When surveyed, 36 percent said they would take more classes in a semester if tuition and fees were lower. Few could characterize themselves as being immune from cost. If tuition went up, 30 percent said they would need to borrow more money and 11 percent said they would have to drop out.

As a group, community college students are averse to taking on debt in pursuit of education. On average, they accumulate a debt of \$1,500. While that is smaller than debt loads of four-year program graduates, it is a substantial amount for low-income students.

Community college students are motivated by their belief that educational achievement will benefit them in the job market. The majority – 81 percent – see better job opportunities and higher wages as the most important benefits of having a degree.

The colleges must strive to keep programs current with changing job market demands. Students demonstrate a keen knowledge of the labor market and the kind of skills that enhance their marketability. Reaching all regions of the state with programs that are current and adaptable when jobs change will remain a core challenge for the colleges.

As in the past, nearly all community college students are from Maine – 97 percent. The pattern of increased part-time enrollment shows that more students are intent on upgrading their skills for work in Maine. In 2001, 37 percent of first-year students were attending one of the colleges part-time. This is a large increase from just six years ago when only 20 percent were attending part time.

These students are more attuned to the fact that continuous learning is fundamental to their career success. Their expectations of the community college as a resource will grow in tandem with the employer expectations they experience in the work world.

Trends in Two-Year College Education

Technical and Community College Development

The first community colleges in the U.S. were founded at the beginning of the 20th century, both to better prepare students for four-year programs and to improve higher education access. Other two-year programs began with a technical or occupational focus. For example, the Great Depression spurred the federal government to fund two-year institutions to retrain the workforce and help the nation transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy.

These early development stages largely bypassed Maine. It was not until 1946 that Maine opened its first public vocational technical institute, responding to the national movement to re-train World War II veterans. Again this period of development unfolded more robustly in other parts of the country. Many regions with larger populations grew two-year colleges from their local school districts or

through wide-ranging state initiatives. Some of these new colleges eventually gained local taxing authority to support their growth and development.

The 1960s were a major period of two-year college development. Maine participated more actively this time, creating five more regional vocational technical institutions. Still, these two-year institutions – as the name indicated – focused on vocational programs. Maine had the infrastructure for future community college offerings and highly valuable vocational programs, but not a true community college system. Maine’s public universities became the entry points to higher education for many students, but generally at higher cost in comparison to two-year community colleges in other states. In contrast, some states, most notably California, developed extensive networks of community colleges that were free or nearly free to state residents.

Building on earlier initiatives, the Community College Partnership was a first step toward meeting this need, starting with the creation of the Associate in Arts transfer program at the community colleges. However, the historic legacy leaves Maine with more work to do in comparison to other states with the same economic challenges. The public mission of the Community College System, its evolution over the past two decades to the point where today the colleges mirror most comprehensive two-year colleges around the nation, and its efforts to contain cost by freezing tuition – should propel Maine to take the decisive step of developing a low-cost comprehensive two-year college system accessible to students statewide.

Two-Year Colleges Today

Two-year colleges are on the frontlines of major changes sweeping through workplaces and postsecondary education. Their capacity to offer both comprehensive education and a fast changing array of continuing education programs is valuable to students and employers. Nationally, these colleges enroll more than nine million students each year. About half the students are not in a

degree-granting program, in part reflecting the growth of lifelong learning. In total, 44 percent of all undergraduate students in the U.S. are enrolled in public and private two-year colleges.

This huge proportion of the current and future workforce uses community colleges both to broaden their education and to prepare for occupations. Both roles are essential for economic growth. Community colleges also have a unique role in working with many students who have been outside a classroom setting for years. The services that support the success of these students, from academic support to personal counseling, have taken root in community colleges. The colleges' ability to help these students succeed is a direct benefit to workplaces that need better prepared employees.

Maine's Unique Challenge: Keeping Pace

In recent years Maine's community colleges have progressed in the direction needed most by individuals and businesses in the state. The Legislature has voiced its support for expansion of MCCS to an enrollment of 10,000 degree-seeking students this decade. This commitment is proving increasingly to be an essential goal if Maine is to meet the critical need for skilled workers. The state's target growth industries – for example, health care, information technology and metals manufacturing – are experiencing worker shortages. The community colleges must play a leading role in closing those labor market gaps and bringing Maine's college attainment level up to and above national averages.

Government

Competing Needs

The public policy picture for two-year colleges is mixed. The benefits are better understood among policy makers than in the past, in particular how two-year programs can upgrade the workforce and bolster economic growth by raising educational attainment. The Maine Legislature's support of the community colleges' growth plan and recent bond issue are clear evidence that policy makers recognize this connection.

Still, it also must be well understood that competition for public dollars is increasing. Policy makers at both the federal and state levels are seeking to lower taxes or at least maintain current levels. Economic changes in some states, such as declines in key industries, also have put pressure on revenues. Even when economic growth has increased revenues, there is pressure to lower taxes, fund priorities in kindergarten to grade 12 education, health care, environmental protection and other areas. Policy makers also are under pressure to upgrade budgets that suffered during the early 1990s' recession.

Two-year colleges are competing in an environment where their benefit is well documented and usually well-known to policy makers. But, those benefits are weighed against many competing needs, and face an environment of modest increases or actual declines in the public money available. All of which means that even worthy investments may not be sustained.

Federal Policy

Federal policy is not likely to expand the available resources for two-year colleges, although some new funding may be targeted to selected areas. The pressure of potential economic downturn and an interest in stimulating growth with a tax cut could limit the dollars available from public sources. For example, Carl Perkins grants including Tech Prep receive flat funding in the current Bush administration budget proposal. Perkins grants fund vocational programs, both within Maine's community colleges and high schools. Tech Prep is a strong program in Maine that supports development of curriculum connecting two years of high school with two years of community college.

The training benefits of Perkins and Tech Prep are understood and budgets may ultimately support the growing need for the value they offer. However, the budget proposal reflects intense competition for resources that is likely to continue as the dominant trend in public policy.

On the financial aid front, the picture is similar. There was some hope that Pell grants would see additional growth – especially in money available to first-year students. However, the current federal budget proposal does not raise the maximum Pell grant for first-year students. Grants are important for the community colleges because, as the earlier survey data indicates, many students have low incomes and are hesitant about taking on debt for education.

State Policy

In recent years, many states have made real investments in their two-year colleges. However, there are danger signs to heed as well.

The National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs reports that state spending on student aid rose 12.6 percent in 1999-2000. That was the largest increase in many years and reflects that policy makers appreciate the central importance of an educated workforce.

There are, however, substantial financial pressures on sustaining key investments in education. State tax revenues have fallen recently, most precipitously in the Midwest and Southeast but also in Maine. Medicaid spending, as noted earlier, is growing. Medicaid represents about one-fifth of state budgets and its growth, given demographic trends and health care system problems, is difficult to restrain. Energy is another growing cost to state government, again under more pressure in some regions than others.

Maine has done well in this difficult environment. Our policy makers have a deeper understanding about the connection between educational attainment and our economic future than perhaps at any time in our history. Still, policy makers are not immune from the intense financial pressure that can curb or even set back investment in the future. Some lessons from other states show the toll.

Washington state enacted a ballot initiative that curbed state spending and directed how significant portions of the state budget should be spent. This left little remaining discretion for other spending, including higher education investment.

In Alabama, revenue shortfalls have pitted kindergarten to grade 12 education against higher education in a battle where both segments are almost certain to see less funding than they received in prior years.

Maine policy makers understand the value of the community colleges. The systemwide 95 percent placement rate in employment or further education after graduation, the accessibility of campuses and centers, and the clear opportunity Maine has to advance a larger group of high school graduates and under-served adults all weigh in the college's favor. These and other benefits, however, must be explained more vigorously than ever. Policy makers are coping with an environment of scarce resources and worthy priorities. With term limits, there also is less assurance that individual policy makers will have a depth of knowledge about the community colleges and higher education issues over many years. The community colleges' value and the life-changing benefits they deliver

GOVERNMENT *continued*

are apparent only when their story is told and known. Individual colleges and the System collectively are in an environment where they will need to be even more active in demonstrating their current and future value.

MCCS MISSION, VISION & CORE ATTRIBUTES

MCCS Mission

“The basic mission of the Maine Community College System is to provide associate degree, diploma and certificate programs directed at the educational, occupational, technical and transfer needs of the State’s citizens and the workforce needs of the State’s employers...to create an educated, skilled and adaptable labor force which is responsive to the changing needs of the economy of the State and to promote local, regional and statewide economic development.”(*Public Law, c. 431 and approved by the Board of Trustees June 10, 1999*)

MCCS Vision

Maine’s Community Colleges are dedicated to educating today’s students for tomorrow’s career opportunities in an environment that supports personal and professional growth, innovation, and lifelong learning. The colleges are committed to enhancing the quality of life and economic prosperity of Maine through excellence in education.

**Core Services and Attributes of
Maine's Community Colleges:
*A Comprehensive Two-Year College System***

The comprehensive two-year college:

- prepares a well-educated person, one who has the knowledge, skills and values to lead a thoughtful, creative and productive life; who seeks self-knowledge and understanding of others and the world; is a lifelong learner; is actively engaged in the community and civic life; and shows tolerance and respect for cultural, ethnic and intellectual diversity;
- awards associate degrees, certificates and diplomas;
- offers programs that prepare students for occupations with career progression and/or transfer opportunities for the baccalaureate level;
- offers liberal arts transfer programs, providing the core liberal arts foundation required for most baccalaureate programs and associate degree career programs;
- focuses primarily on regional needs, with a commitment to serving and supporting its local communities;
- offers business & industry training and services, providing customized training and upgrading, at a place and time convenient for employees and employers;

MCCS MISSION, VISION AND CORE ATTRIBUTES *continued*

- is low cost, to assure broad access to college;
- is easily accessible to a diverse population, offering on-site and off-site day, evening and weekend courses with significant opportunity to pursue a degree part time;
- provides access to students who can benefit from its educational offerings through modified open admission policies. Applicants must possess a high school diploma or GED and meet program of study prerequisite requirements;
- provides effective student support services such as academic assessment, counseling, remediation, and career placement;
- provides opportunities for lifelong learning to support professional and personal growth, through a diverse array of credit and noncredit courses, workshops, and seminars;
- actively pursues a diverse learning community in which cultural, ethnic and intellectual diversity are respected and embraced;
- provides a learner-centered environment, in which teaching and learning are the primary focus of the institution;
- is a partner and facilitator in regional economic development, providing training to support the creation of high-wage, high-skill jobs in new and established industries;
- develops students with awareness of global issues;

MCCS MISSION, VISION AND CORE ATTRIBUTES *continued*

- offers co-curricular opportunities, including clubs, student activities, sports and leadership opportunities;
- is committed to community building, serving as facilitator/community resource for bringing people and groups with a common interest together to address local issues;
- serves as a resource for the college and the public, offering cultural and special events; and
- partners with other local and state providers in workforce development.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND MEASURES

***NOTE:** Measures identified as “A” refer to actions the System will take based on adequate financial support from the State, which MCCS defines as increases in appropriations equal to the rate of increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Measures identified as “B” represent significant change or increase in services and, therefore, require additional funding from the State. These objectives will be achieved through a combination of college and System-level strategies.*

GOAL 1:

Increase enrollment to 15,000 matriculated students by the end of the decade through increased capacity, accessibility and affordability.

OBJECTIVE 1.1

Increase matriculated enrollment.

- MEASURE 1A:** Achieve 2.5% growth annually in matriculated unduplicated headcount in credit courses measured against a base of fall 2003 data and maintain that growth rate through 2007. This rate of growth will bring annual enrollment funded by the MCCS to 9822 students.
- MEASURE 1B:** To reach the projected growth rate approximately 1295 additional students will need to be added each year between fall 2004 and 2007 and additional funding will be required from the State.
- MEASURE 2:** Increase scholarships awarded System-wide to an annual total of \$1,600,000 by FY2005 and at that point establish measures for subsequent years.

OBJECTIVE 1.2

Increase non-matriculated enrollment.

- MEASURE:** Achieve 1% growth in total unduplicated non-matriculated headcount in credit courses measured against base year FY 02 and maintain that growth for at least two years.

OBJECTIVE 1.3

Improve student advancement/retention.

- MEASURE 1:** The Presidents or their designees will establish goals for advancement/retention under the guidelines of the definitions and methodology for calculating advancement/retention success provided in the Student Retention Benchmarking Committee Report and approved by the Board of Trustees in November 1997. The Presidents will monitor advancement/retention results annually and will recommend a specific goal when sufficient data is available.
- MEASURE 2:** Each college will report annually on its results in student advancement/retention.

GOAL 2:

Achieve standards of quality in core services of the System and colleges.

OBJECTIVE 2.1

Ensure that core services for students meet or exceed national standards. Core services are defined in the measure.

MEASURE: Each college achieves a rating that equals or exceeds the national mean for two-year public colleges in the core services measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory, including:

- Academic advising/counseling
- Academic Services
- Admissions & Financial Aid
- Campus Climate
- Campus Support Services
- Concern for the Individual
- Instructional Effectiveness
- Registration Effectiveness
- Responsiveness to Diverse Populations
- Safety and Security
- Service Excellence
- Student Centeredness

OBJECTIVE 2.2

Create a work environment that is conducive to achieving excellence in all areas of the System.

MEASURE Through utilization of the nationally recognized Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) Survey, the Systemwide composite average for each domain will be at or above the national average through 2007.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND MEASURES *continued*

OBJECTIVE 2.3

Ensure employer satisfaction in the quality of learning opportunities offered by Maine's community colleges.

MEASURE: Those programs that hold national certification will follow the employer satisfaction survey requirements of their accrediting organization and will report those results as part of the MCCS Program Review Process.

OBJECTIVE 2.4

Maintain a high level of graduates employed or continuing their education.

MEASURE: A System-wide combined rate of at least 94% of graduates continuing their education (full or part-time) and/or employed within nine months of graduation will be maintained.

OBJECTIVE 2.5

Ensure that graduating students are successful in obtaining certification and/or licensure in their field of study as required for employment.

MEASURE: Maintain a minimum 85% success rate of graduates taking certification and/or licensure examinations as required for employment.

OBJECTIVE 2.6

Encourage and support professional development for faculty and staff.

MEASURE: 2% of each college's and the System Office's E&G budget will be expended annually for professional development.

OBJECTIVE 2.7

Ensure faculty are encouraged to achieve higher levels of academic credentials.

MEASURE: Each year, each college president will report to the System President the number of faculty pursuing additional professional credentials and the credentials sought.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND MEASURES *continued*

OBJECTIVE 2.8

Assure the continued financial integrity of the Maine Community College System.

MEASURE: Achievement of “unqualified” annual audit reports consistent with GASB standards.

GOAL 3:

Utilize technologically mediated delivery methods that best serve the evolving needs of students.

OBJECTIVE 3.1

Provide professional development opportunities for faculty to enable increased use of computer technology in program delivery.

MEASURE: 75% of faculty will utilize computer technology as part of their courses or teach courses online by January 2007.

OBJECTIVE 3.2

Increase the number of community college students taking online courses.

MEASURE: The number of registrations for online courses will be reported annually through 2005 at which time measures will be established for subsequent years.

GOAL 4:

Continue to foster and enhance an environment that promotes diversity.

OBJECTIVE 4.1

Each college will assess its situation in relation to diversity, develop and implement a diversity plan in accordance with CIHE standards, and establish means to monitor and update the plan.

MEASURE: Diversity plans from each college will be reviewed by the College President no later than July 2003, and progress against plan will be monitored annually through 2007.

GOAL 5:

Complete the transition to comprehensive two-year (community) colleges.

OBJECTIVE 5.1

Emphasize the importance of occupational education aimed at a more highly credentialed workforce in the mission of the community colleges in the MCCS.

MEASURE: At least 80% of programs of study offered at each college will be occupational.

OBJECTIVE 5.2

Ensure curriculum continues to provide the depth and breadth of course offerings needed to meet the evolving needs of students while continuing to meet CIHE standards.

MEASURE: The College Presidents will ensure that a process is in place by June 2005 to review their college's course offerings annually to assure they address students' needs and academic requirements.

OBJECTIVE 5.3

Maintain accreditation by CIHE.

MEASURE: All colleges will continue to meet the requirements of CIHE accreditation standards.

GOAL 6:

Be an educational leader in economic development and an innovative contributor to economic growth.

OBJECTIVE 6.1

Increase the credit and non-credit headcount generated by the divisions serving business and industry.

- MEASURE 1:** Systemwide headcount will be reported each year and monitored along with the economy.
- MEASURE 2:** Customized training participants will be reported annually.
- MEASURE 3:** Maine Quality Centers will be measured by the following criteria:
 - A. Achieve total job placement of 2800 individuals between 2002 and 2007.
 - B. Achieve a return on investment to the State for Quality Centers education and training funds within 36 months of date of hire.

GOAL 7:

Ensure that the community colleges have adequate financial resources to fulfill their mission by securing and maintaining increased State appropriations and federal, private and alternative funding and by the efficient utilization of such funding.

OBJECTIVE 7.1

Increase financial support for the M CCS.

MEASURE: Each college and the System Office will report annually on the amount of cash and equipment, including grants, obtained.

OBJECTIVE 7.2

Increase investments in capital assets.

MEASURE 1: Each college will develop and maintain an annual capital plan and budget that details short- and long-term capital needs.

MEASURE 2: Each college will report annually the investments made to address their capital needs listed in Schedule III of the biennial budget.

MEASURE 3: Not later than FY2006 M CCS will request legislation for bonded debt to address issues with facilities and instructional equipment within the System.

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This Strategic Plan represents the vision and intentions of the Maine Community College System community and Board of Trustees. The purpose of the plan is to help focus and articulate the long-term, diverse goals of the System. While the MCCS Board of Trustees has adopted this plan in good faith, the Board does not intend to create or confer any contractual or other legal rights by way of this document.

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